

### Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

### Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-16: (Canceled).

Claim 17 (Currently Amended): A protective cap for at least one contact tube (40,41) of a welding torch (10) each provided with a bore for guiding and contacting a respectively fed welding wire, which protective cap includes a housing (33) made of, or coated with, a poorly electrically conductive material and adapted to receive said contact tube (40, 41), and a bore (31, 32) provided therein to allow the exit of the welding wire (13), wherein at least one opening (29, 30) for receiving at least one contact tube (40, 41) is provided in the housing (33) and each opening (29, 30) is connected with a respective bore (31, 32) provided in the housing (33), and each bore (31, 32) is arranged in a manner corresponding with the course of the welding wire (13) within the contact tube (40, 41) in the installed state of the protective cap (27), so as to enable a respectively fed welding wire (13) to exit to a welding site through the bore of

each contact tube (40, 41) and each bore (31, 32) of the protective cap (27),

wherein at least two openings (29, 30) for receiving at least two contact tubes (40, 41) fastened therein are provided in the housing (33), and that fastening elements (35) are arranged on an outer surface (34) of the housing (33) to enable the establishment of a connection with a gas nozzle (28) of the welding torch (10), thus causing all conductive elements of the welding torch (10) to be covered by the protective cap (27) in the region of the gas nozzle (28), ~~i.e., on the end of the torch body and wherein bores (38) are provided on the housing (33) to allow a gas (8) fed by the welding torch (10) to exit into the region between the gas nozzle (28) and the protective cap (27).~~

Claim 18 (Previously Presented): A protective cap according to claim 17, wherein the housing (33) of the protective cap (27) is made of a material exhibiting a low tendency to metal spatter adherence.

Claim 19 (Previously Presented): A protective cap according to claim 17, wherein the housing (33) of the protective cap (27) is coated with a material exhibiting a low tendency to metal

spatter adherence.

Claim 20 (Previously Presented): A protective cap according to claim 17, wherein the housing (33) of the protective cap (27) is made of ceramics.

Claim 21 (Previously Presented): A protective cap according to claim 17, wherein the connection of the protective cap (27) with the gas nozzle (28) is formed by a clamping or screwing connection.

Claim 22 (Previously Presented): A protective cap according to claim 17, wherein the fastening elements (35) are comprised of at least one web (36) via which the protective cap (27) is connectible with the gas nozzle (28) in a manner that the protective cap (27) is held as the gas nozzle (28) is slipped on, or fastened to, the welding torch (10).

Claim 23 : Canceled.

Claim 24 (Currently Amended): A protective cap according to claim ~~23~~ 17, wherein said bores are provided on the housing (33)

in a radially peripheral manner.

Claim 25 (Previously Presented): A protective cap according to claim 17, wherein at least one contact tube (40, 41) is integrated in the housing (33) so as to form a sandwich component (39).

Claim 26 (Previously Presented): A protective cap according to claim 25, wherein at least one contact tube (40, 41) is embedded in the housing (33) over a partial region.

Claim 27 (Previously Presented): A protective cap according to claim 25, wherein the contact tubes (40, 41) are made of an electrically conductive material, particularly copper or a copper alloy, thus providing current transfer to the welding wire (13).

Claim 28 (Previously Presented): A welding torch including at least two contact tubes (40, 41) enclosed by a common gas nozzle (28), wherein each contact tube (40, 41) has a bore (31, 32) for guiding and contacting a respectively fed welding wire (13), and wherein a protective cap (27) according to claim 17 is placed over the contact tubes (40, 41).

Claim 29 (Previously Presented): A welding torch according to claim 28, wherein the contact tubes (40, 41) are made of an electrically conductive material, thus providing current transfer to the welding wires (13).

Claim 30 (Previously Presented): A welding torch according to claim 29, wherein the contact tubes (40, 41) are made of copper or a copper alloy.